

# Shining Star

Paradise found on the idyllic island of Providenciales.

Just a two-hour direct flight from Atlanta, a tropical oasis awaits on pristine Providenciales. While it's undoubtedly the most lively of the 40 or so islands that comprise Turks & Caicos (just eight of them are populated), Provo is still blissfully low-key.

In keeping with the laid-back vibe of the island are our digs for the weekend at the posh but comfortable Seven Stars Resort. The privately owned property reopened in 2009 after a change in ownership and management, and is on the fast track to becoming one of the island's best hotels.

The Seven Stars experience begins upon arrival at the lush, palm tree-lined entrance. Just a 15-minute ride from the airport, the three towers of Seven Stars soar high above the many smaller boutique properties that line Grace Bay. A friendly staff is on hand to greet guests with rum punch, a chilled towel and a personal tour of the property. While it's one of the larger properties on Provo, Seven

Stars still has an intimate, friendly vibe about it. Standout members of the staff don't just smile when you cross paths, they remember your name, hometown and plans for your stay.

The property's 107 guest suites are housed in three oceanfront towers—aptly named Alhena, Alya and Maia—Greek mythology is the overriding theme at Seven Stars. Ranging from spacious junior suites to a massive two-bedroom penthouse (to the tune of 7,000 square feet), all accommodations feature balconies or terraces, well-appointed kitchens and marble bathrooms with soaking tubs. Rooms are tastefully decorated and comfortable enough that once settled in, you'll feel right at home (or at least like extending your stay for another day... or week). The overwhelming highlight of our room, however, is the incomparable view of Grace Bay—it's turquoise blue water is better than any postcard.

If you're looking to do more than just look at the water, use of all equipment at the Watersports Hut (Hobie Cats, kayaks,



The view of Grace Bay from our oceanfront suite.



snorkeling gear and more) is complimentary. The experienced staff there knows Turks and Caicos well, and can arrange everything from sailing lessons to diving trips. Alternately, sunbathing and strolling the white-sand beach are both considered to be perfectly acceptable activities for the day.

To take your level of relaxation up a notch, book an appointment at the spa. While there are just three treatment rooms, beachside or poolside massages are also an option, as are in-suite services. The Island Dream, a 90-minute combo treatment that includes a full-body massage and mini facial, is highly recommended. Pair that with 15 to 20 minutes in the pristine relaxation area, and any remnants of the real world are sure to be whisked away. Next door is a modest but well-equipped fitness center with a full range of cardiovascular and resistance training machines. Poolside yoga classes are a regular occurrence for those who prefer a low-impact workout, and personal training sessions can be arranged through the concierge.

Whether you're an exercise junkie or an expert at the art of relaxation, a day in the Caribbean sun beckons for a special meal to cap things off. The property's recently reinvented signature restaurant, Seven, serves up cuisine inspired by the tradition and culture of the Turks and Caicos islands. Prior to beginning our meal in the restaurant's candlelit courtyard, our server presented the Seven Salt Collection, a variety of four flavored salts honoring the islands' 250-year legacy as the world's largest exporter of salt—a nice touch that enhances the dining experience and reminds us that we're not in Atlanta any-



Clockwise from top left: The lush entrance to Seven Stars; All suites feature fully equipped kitchens; A room with a (serious) view.





Clockwise from top left: The Deck offers casual eats, cocktails and live music; Guest suites are comfortable, spacious and feature a chic island aesthetic; Oceanfront balconies afford sweeping views; The Seven Stars spa offers a bevy of treatments for pure vacation relaxation.



more. House specialties include a rum-butter poached local lobster, curried mussels and coffee-rubbed braised oxtail in a natural jus. There's a separate selection of steaks (including vegetarian options like Eggplant Steak) that can be customized with an array of exotic rubs, including a coconut curry, chermoula (lemon, garlic, saffron and spices) and chimichurri. While we noticed a couple of hiccups throughout the service and food preparation, it's clear that Seven is headed in a delicious direction with its exotic fare and pristine setting. Other on-property dining options include The Sand Dollar, perfect for an easy poolside lunch and The Deck. Come sundown, this beachside eatery turns into a cozy lounge complete with live music, plush seating and fire pits.

A trip to the Caribbean isn't complete without a boat ride, and a definite highlight of our trip was a half-day snorkel and conch tour with Caicos Dream Tours. Arranged through Seven Stars, we set off first thing in the morning for a scenic cruise of Grace Bay. From exploring pristine Half Moon Bay to snorkeling among neon fish and coral and lunching on freshly caught conch salad, it was a leisurely

paced adventure that made for truly a perfect day—something that's not hard to come by on the Turks and Caicos. —LISA HORTEN

#### SEVEN STARS RESORT

Grace Bay Road, Providenciales  
sevenstarsgracebay.com  
866.570.7777

## Get Out and Go!

*Can't sit still? A few favorite activities on Turks and Caicos.*

#### An Island Overview with **Caicos Dream Tours**

From the half-day snorkel and conch cruise to a private fishing charter, these guys can accommodate any outing—plus they know the islands inside and out. *Ask for John, 649.231.7274, caicosdreamtours.com*

#### Swim with the Humpbacks on **Salt Cay**

Take a 25-minute island hopper flight from Provo to the "island that time forgot." Famous for its humpback whales, Salt Cay is a desolate but fascinating day trip—just be sure to plan ahead, same-day flights only happen on Fridays. *Ask for Debbie, 649.241.1009, saltcaydivers.tc*

#### Drink like a Local at **Jimmy's Dive Bar & Grill**

A less than 5-minute walk from Seven Stars, Jimmy's is a laid-back bar opened by a New Yorker who was fed up with city life. *Ports of Call Shopping Plaza, Grace Bay Road, 646.946.5282*

#### Hit the Greens at **Provo Golf and Country Club**

Provo's 18-hole championship course recently hosted the Caribbean Amateur Open—tee times can be reserved through the Seven Stars activities desk. *877.218.9124, provogolfclub.com*